



GEO425: Political Ecology



Spring semester 2022

Core elective module

Time

Wednesday 9:00-12:00

Room

tbd

Lecturers

Norman Backhaus (NB; norman.backhaus@geo.uzh.ch)

Mollie Chapman (MC; mollie.chapman@geo.uzh.ch)

Sierra Deutsch (SD; sierra.deutsch@geo.uzh.ch): module responsible

Guests

Annina Michel, (AM; GIUZ)

Jevgeniy Bluwstein, University of Fribourg

Language

English

Syllabus

THIS IS A DRAFT VERSION SUBJECT TO SOME (MINOR) CHANGES!

1. Course description

The use and management of nature and natural resources has increasingly become a focus of global politics with consequences across geographical scales, including on the local level. The course provides participants with insights into relations between nature and/or the environment and society and the production of knowledge about these relations, as well as the power dynamics inherent in governing these. It focuses on key debates within the wide field of political ecology and on challenges arising from the protection of nature, the use of natural resources and the governance of land. We will mainly read texts and discuss them in class, complemented by inputs by the lecturers and guests.

We use OLAT as a platform to share slides and information (so please subscribe to the forum to stay informed).

2. Preconditions and learning outcomes

In order to be able to participate you need to have completed a Bachelor thesis. Upon completion of the course, you will

- be able to articulate key theories and debates in political ecology,
- have specialized in one topic and within it formulated arguments of environment-society relations,
- be able to relate abstract concepts to concrete problems,
- have improved your skills in presenting scientific debates in discussions, papers and talks.

3. Course examination and workload

Achievement	Description	Single/team	Grading	Weight [%]
Blog	written	single	pass/fail	
Presentation	oral	single	1-6	10
Poster	written	single	1-6	20
Service-learning/Research Paper	written	single	1-6	70
TOTAL achievements				100

The module can be repeated once.

Activity	Workload [%]
Presence during the seminar	30
Reading and discussion of texts (incl. blog)	25
Paper proposal	10
Presentation	5
Poster	5
Service-Learning/Research Paper writing	25
TOTAL activities	100
	6 ECTS

We expect **attendance** in all classes. If for a good reason you must be absent, then please email the lecturers with sufficient notice.

Students who commit **plagiarism** in their seminar papers will automatically fail the course. They will not be allowed to resubmit a new seminar paper. In accordance with the University of Zurich's legal

standards we reserve the right to pursue disciplinary measures against authors of plagiarism. The definition of plagiarism is based on the guidelines elaborated by the University's Lehrkommission.

Universität Zürich (2007, accessed: 17 February 2021):

http://www.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:00000000-591f-4c87-ffff-ffffe62562b4/20110314_LK_Plagiarism.pdf

4. Tasks

Reading texts

This is a postgraduate level course, so you are expected to engage in more autonomous work than in earlier levels of study, and this involves reading avidly and engaging actively. You are expected to read compulsory texts for the classes during the semester (see workload above). These compulsory readings can be found on OLAT and are underlined in the bibliography list below. They will give you an entry point into the lecture topic, and importantly, they will be the basis for class discussions. To make the best out of this course, it is important that you engage deeply with these texts (making notes about your thoughts, about unclear passages...), and that you engage actively in the debates that will be fostered in small group and class discussions.

Each of you writes two short blog entries about one text and comments on at least four other blog entries (see below). You should also feel free to use these weekly blogs if you would like to raise and discuss questions or receive feedback from students and lecturers ahead of class about these readings.

A list of further readings (not underlined) is also proposed for every teaching week based on the theme covered. These readings are also recommended as points of departure for the seminar paper you will write towards the end of the course.

You will also find useful advice here to help you read actively and critically on our OLWA online course (www.olwa.ch): https://www.geo.uzh.ch/microsite/olwa/olwa/en/html/unit3_kap33.html

There are political ecology handbooks that you will find useful (i.e. the Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology, and the International Handbook of Political Ecology).

Blog

You will select two sessions (via OLAT) and write a short blog on each of them, answering pre-given questions and tasks (see below). In addition, you will comment on the blogs of at least four other students over the course of the semester. The texts are part of the list of compulsory texts on political ecology that are read by all. Other students are free to comment on their colleagues' blogs or refer to previous blog entries in their own blog. Blog entries must be completed until noon on the Monday before the respective seminar session and comments should be submitted before we meet Wednesday morning. Following points must be addressed in the blog entries:

- Main arguments and points of discussion of the publication
- Critical reflection regarding the content of the publication
- Open questions, unclear aspects
- Two to three questions or points for discussion for the seminar session

Service-learning

As an alternative to a research paper, we are offering the option of a service-learning project/paper. Students who choose this option will be expected to choose an organization to volunteer with for a minimum of four hours (this can be all at once or spread over a longer period of time). You would then apply a written concept or concepts to your experiences with the organization as a case study to explore

the concept(s). Moreover, you will write a short report on your experiences and how they relate to your concept(s).

Outline and paper

Based on the topics and texts presented in the course, you should find a topic you want to focus on in your paper. You will think about and write down 3 possible essay topics and bring these along to the seminar session where we discuss the outlines (see program). Following the decision on a topic, an outline has to be submitted. This should contain the following information on 1-2 pages:

- Title and reflection on what the paper is about
- Problem statement/Service-learning organization and research question
- Aims of the paper
- Bibliography

After receiving feedback on the outline of the paper you start working on your paper, which should be drafted as a scientific paper (i.e. as in a scientific journal, including abstract and keywords), and comprise of approx. 5'000 words without bibliography.

Poster and presentation

Towards the end of the course the topics of your paper will be presented during two poster sessions. For this you prepare (a) a digital poster in landscape format that will also be printed on an A3 sheet (in case that we can have our presentation session in presence), and (b) a very short (2 minutes) oral presentation of the poster.

- a) The digital poster will be presented via beamer or an online tool (i.e. MS Teams) with lower resolution than current computer screens (or printers).
 - Hence, larger fonts and not too subtle color schemes should be used (check before by sharing with your colleagues, since on your own screen the resolution is usually better).
 - Use landscape format and adequate software (Microsoft Powerpoint and similar applications work fine, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign, Affinity Publisher, Affinity Designer etc. have more options but require some deeper knowledge).
 - Refer to www.olwa.ch for instructions.
 - Upload the poster one day before your presentation via OLAT in pdf format.
 - Print an A3 hard copy (create a pdf respectively) and bring it to your presentation (if it is not online only).
- b) Prepare a short speech of 2 minutes (a—slightly prolonged—elevator pitch) with which you present your poster.

5. Program

W	Date	Wednesday 9:00-12:00	Tasks
Part I: Introduction			
1	23.02.22	Introduction: What is political ecology? (NB)	<i>For all sessions: read the compulsory texts</i>
2	02.03.22	Capitalism, authoritarianism, and the environment (SD)	
Part II: Brainstorming and topic exploration			
3	09.03.22	Brainstorming service-learning or research paper topics	
Part III: Political ecology in global environmental governance/issues			
4	16.03.22	Political ecologies of the "Anthropocene" and global change (NB)	<i>Bring along 3 possible essay topics (in written form)</i>
5	23.03.22	Urban political ecology (NB)	
6	30.03.22	Political ecology of biodiversity (MC) (online or in person, tbd)	
Part IV: Governing nature			
7	06.04.22	Half Earth/Enclosures/Fortress conservation (SD)	
8	13.04.22	Neoliberal conservation and governmentality (SD)	<i>Submission of paper outline</i>
	20.04.22	<i>Easter break, no seminar</i>	
Part V: Approaches to transforming socio-ecological relations			
9	27.04.22	Convivial conservation/The ontological debate: What is "nature"?"/"indigenous" perspectives (SD)	
10	04.05.22	Environmental justice in nature conservation (AM)	
11	11.05.22	Conservation and environmental values (MC) (online or in person, tbd)	
12	18.05.22	Transformative change, degrowth, and eco-socialism (JB)	
Part VI: Poster presentations			
13	25.05.22	Presentations I	<i>Submission of poster</i>
14	01.06.22	Presentations II	
	12.06.21	Submission of paper	<i>Submission of paper/report</i>

6. Texts

The compulsory texts are listed here, and you can find them as pdf on OLAT. A list with other texts (also on OLAT) shall give you inspiration for your paper and poster or if you are interested to know more about a certain topic.

Week 1: Introduction

Robbins, P. 2012. Political ecology. A critical introduction. (2nd edition), Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 9–24.

Week 2: Capitalism, authoritarianism, and the environment

Deutsch, S., 2021. Populist authoritarian neoliberalism in Brazil: making sense of Bolsonaro's anti-environment agenda. Journal of Political Ecology 28(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.2458/jpe.2994>

Week 4: Political ecologies of the Anthropocene and climate change

Liverman, D. 2015. Reading Climate Change and Climate Governance as Political Ecologies. In: Perreault, T., Bridge, G. & McCarthy, J. (eds.). The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology, 303–319. London/New York: Routledge.

Week 5: Urban political ecology

Tubridy, D. 2020. Green climate change adaptation and the politics of designing ecological infrastructures. Geoforum, 113, 133-145.

Week 6: Political ecology of biodiversity

Brosius, J. P. (1999). Green dots, pink hearts: displacing politics from the Malaysian rain forest. American Anthropologist, 101(1), 36–57.

Week 7: Half earth or whole earth/ Enclosures/ Fortress conservation

Locke, H. 2013. Nature needs half: a necessary and hopeful new agenda for protected areas. PARKS 19(2): 13–22.

Schleicher, J., Zaehring, J. G., Fastré, C., Vira, B., Visconti, P., Sandbrook, C. 2019. Protecting half of the planet could directly affect over one billion people. Nature sustainability doi:10.1038/s41893-019-0423-y

Week 8: Neoliberal conservation and governmentality

Holmes, G. & Cavanagh, J. 2016. A review of the social impacts of neoliberal conservation: Formations, inequalities, contestations. Geoforum 75: 199–209.

Week 9: Convivial conservation/ The ontological debate: What is "nature"?/ "indigenous" perspectives

Büscher, B., & Fletcher, R. 2020. The conservation revolution: Radical ideas for saving nature beyond the anthropocene. Chapter 5: Towards convivial conservation. London, New York: Verso.

Week 10: Environmental justice in nature conservation

Svarstad, H. & Benjaminsen, T. A. 2020. Reading radical environmental justice through a political ecology lens. Geoforum 108: 1–11.

Week 11: Conservation and environmental values

Trainor Fleisher, S. 2006. Realms of Value: Conflicting Natural Resource Values and Incommensurability. Environmental Values 15: 3–29.

Week 12: Transformative change, degrowth, and eco-socialism

Bluwstein, J., 2021. Transformation is not a metaphor. Political Geography.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102450>

Wainwright, J. and Mann, G., 2013. Climate leviathan. Antipode, 45(1), pp.1-22.